

DROPOUTS: **One Is Too Many**

Partner organizations:

- Michigan Education Association (MEA)
- Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA)
- Kent Intermediate School District
- Michigan's Children
- Michigan's Charter Schools
- Michigan's Promise
- Michigan Future, Inc.

Mission:

To conduct hearings gathering input on how to stem the dropout crisis and present those findings to Gov. Jennifer Granholm and the Legislature to assist in the development of sound education policy.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Michigan dropout crisis costs \$2.5 billion annually *Solutions sought to raise graduation rates*

EAST LANSING, Mich., April 30, 2008 – Finding ways to fix Michigan's dropout crisis is the focus of public hearings beginning next week, part of a statewide initiative to increase the number of high school graduates to stabilize a weak economy.

By some estimates, about 20,000 Michigan students drop out of school every year. According to Columbia University's prestigious Teachers College, boosting high school graduation rates would save \$127,000 per new graduate through extra tax revenues, reduced costs of public health, crime and justice, and decreased welfare payments. Every year that passes without a solution to the dropout crisis drains another \$2.5 billion from local, state and national coffers.

The Michigan Education Association (MEA), in partnership with several other groups, is sponsoring the hearings. Partners include the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA), Kent Intermediate School District, Michigan's Children, Michigan's Charter Schools, Michigan's Promise and Michigan Future, Inc.

"Too many students are leaving school before graduating," said MEA President Iris K. Salters. "We need to work together to understand the scope of the problem and to find sustainable solutions."

Local and intermediate school districts have struggled to reverse the trend. No comprehensive state or national plan exists to help schools boost graduation rates, despite the significant impact on the economy and society.

"We're hoping the hearings lead to meaningful reforms to help end the dropout crisis," Salters said. "One dropout is too many – for our students, for our communities and for our state."

The hearings are open to the public. Invited guests also will provide testimony about how the dropout crisis affects the economy, families and crime. The findings of these hearings will be presented to political leaders and the public at the Michigan Dropout Prevention Leadership Summit on Oct. 20 in Lansing.

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"Addressing high school retention and increasing graduation rates must become one of our highest priorities, and we look forward to working with the MEA and other leaders in the education community to gather 'best practices' from across the state and bring them to Lansing," said Dan Quisenberry, president of Michigan's Charter Schools.

Added Ron Koehler, assistant superintendent of the Kent Intermediate School District: "If we don't find a way to keep young people in school, we're sentencing them to a life of poverty. We know what does not work – more of what we've been doing. These hearings are about learning new ways to help kids succeed and duplicating those efforts across the state."

Hearings are planned in 10 communities. All hearings are scheduled from 4 to 7 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

- **May 8, Grand Rapids**
Kent Career Technical Center, 1655 East Beltline NE, Grand Rapids (4 to 6 p.m.).
- **May 15, Macomb County**
Macomb Intermediate School District, 44001 Garfield Road, Clinton Township.
- **May 22, Detroit**
University Preparatory Academy, 600 Antoinette, Detroit.
- **June 5, Lansing**
Capital Area District Library, 401 S. Capitol Ave., Lansing.
- **June 12, Flint**
Genesee Intermediate School District's Davis Education Center, 2413 W. Maple Ave., Flint.
- **Sept. 4, Traverse City**
Traverse Area District Library, 610 Woodmere Ave., Traverse City.
- **Sept. 11, Ishpeming**
Ishpeming High School, 319 E. Division St., Ishpeming.
- **Sept. 18, Western Wayne County**
Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency, 33500 Van Born Road, Wayne.
- **Sept. 25, Saginaw**
Zauel Public Library, 3100 N. Center, Saginaw
- **Oct. 2, Kalamazoo**
Western Michigan University, Fetzer Center, 1903 Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo.

Media Contacts:

MEA, Doug Pratt, 517-337-5508

Kent Intermediate School District, Ron Koehler, 616-364-1333

MAISA, Jon Tomlanovich, 517-327-9260

Michigan's Charter Schools, Gary Naeyaert, 517-374-9167

Michigan's Children, Michele Corey, 517-485-3500